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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

April 26, 1963

SUBJECT: Conversation of Under Secretary Harriman with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko concerning Laos.

PLACE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10:00 A.M.

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.S.R.

A. GROMYKO, Soviet Foreign Minister
S. G. LAPIN, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister
M. N. SMIRNOVSKY, Chief of USA Division, MFA
A. S. CHISTYAKOV, Chief of SEA Division, MFA
KROKHAEV, Interpreter

U.S.

Under Secretary of State Averell HARRIMAN
Ambassador Foy D. KOHLER
Michael V. FORRESTAL, White House Staff
William H. SULLIVAN, Department of State
Thompson R. BUCHANAN, First Secretary of Embassy

After a preliminary exchange of courtesies, including references to the death of Deputy Foreign Minister PUSHKIN, Governor Harriman recalled that the President and Premier KHRUSHCHEV had agreed at Vienna in June, 1961, to work together for the establishment of a neutral and independent Laos. Governor Harriman went on to say that the President has no reason to believe that the U.S.S.R. has abandoned this policy. For its part, the United States has done all it can to support the government of Souvanna PHOUA, although Souvanna Phoua was not our candidate. The United States has

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implemented the spirit and letter of the Geneva Agreement. Recent events, however, have aroused our concern and prompted the present visit, to discuss how developments in Laos should be handled so as to avoid a breakdown of the situation.

Governor Harriman said that military and political integration has not progressed as quickly as hoped, but there was at least a cease-fire until the Pathet Lao attacked the neutralist forces under Kong Le. The latest of three cease-fire agreements is to be welcomed. However, there have been previous cease-fires and they have been broken. We understand that Souvanna Phouma has demanded the reestablishment of the status quo to that prevailing before April 4, when fighting broke out. The United States welcomed the agreement reached by Souvanna Phouma and the Co-Chairmen at Khang Khay to station ICC groups with both the Pathet Lao and Kong Le forces, and regrets Pathet Lao refusal. Kong Le agreed, despite his objections to being alone in accepting an ICC team. The United States considers that the ICC will provide a needed "steady hand" in the situation.

We understand, Governor Harriman said, that an ICC team is proceeding today to join Kong Le, but that the Polish representative on the ICC refuses to permit the team to

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remain overnight, to observe possible incidents occurring in that period. The other members of the ICC have refrained from overruling him by majority vote. The position of the Pole is reported to reflect the fact that Prince SCUPHANOUVONG repudiated his earlier agreement regarding stationing of the ICC. This is typical of the lack of cooperation shown by the Pathet Lao, which disturbs us greatly. We urge the U.S.S.R., therefore, to use its influence so that the ICC can fulfill the functions assigned it under the Geneva Agreement of controlling and supervising the cease-fire. This function cannot be performed unless the ICC has access to all areas. We regard any interference with the movement of the ICC as a "most serious breach" of the Geneva Accords.

Our most recent information shows, Mr. Harriman said, that there has been a fair degree of cooperation between the representatives of the Co-Chairmen in Laos, but that the Pole has remained completely uncooperative. He apparently prefers to follow the orders of the Pathet Lao rather than the dictates of his own conscience. Our first objective, therefore, should be to implement the Vienna and Geneva agreements by giving the ICC full freedom of movement to carry out its responsibilities.

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Mr. Gromyko replied that, according to Soviet information, the situation has recently developed in a way which could take a dangerous turn (po oasnomu puti). The question is: who killed Quinim PHOLSENA, who was a firm supporter of a neutral Laos? Clearly, Mr. Gromyko said,

Governor Harriman said

that the U.S. was as puzzled as the U.S.S.R. by the murder.

Gromyko replied

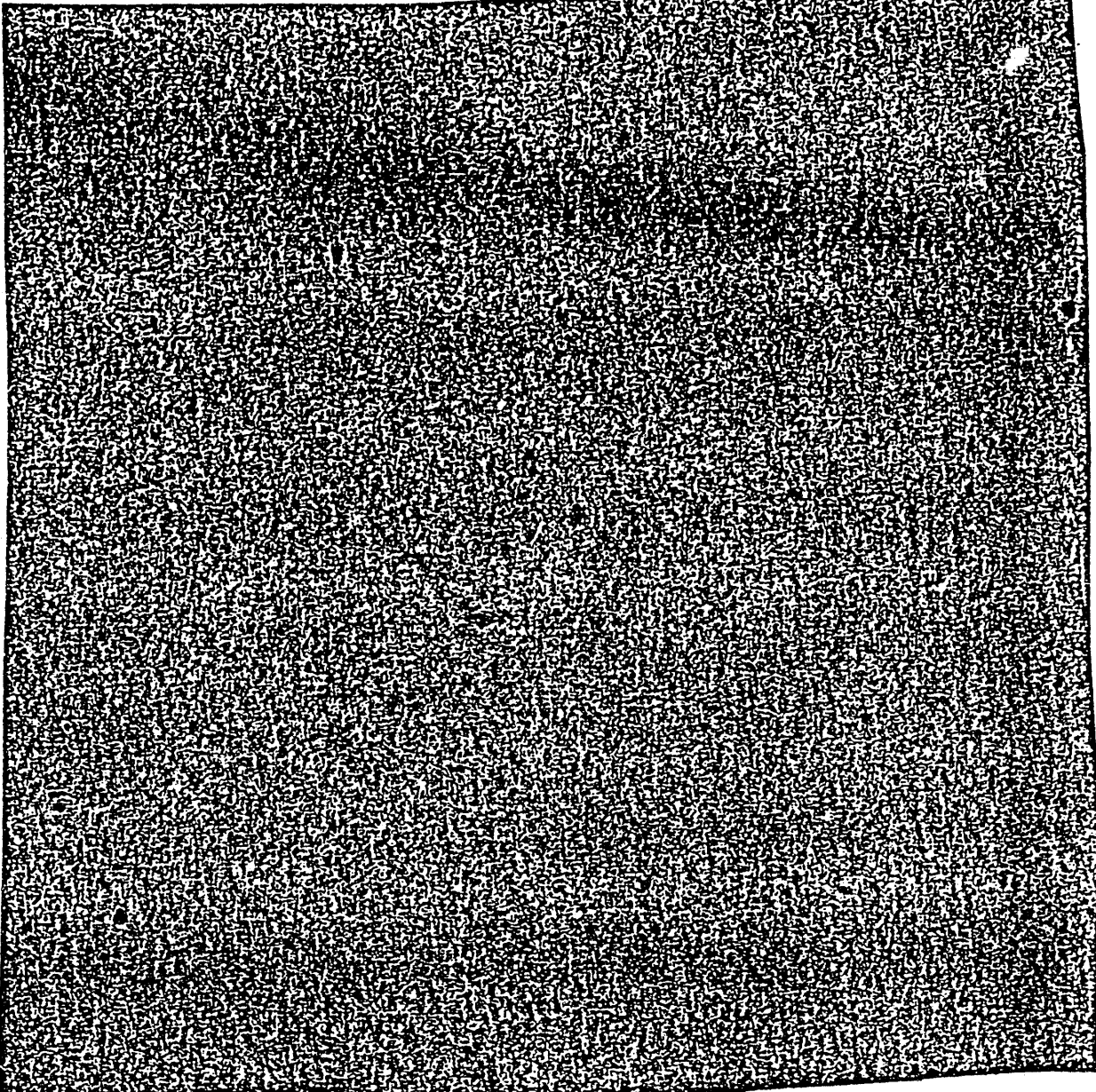
Governor Harriman added that the U.S. had also condemned the murder, to which Gromyko commented, "good, if so."

Mr. Gromyko said that his Government has not changed its position of supporting a neutral and independent Laos, since Vienna and Geneva. He thought that the U.S. understood

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this to be the Soviet position.



Governor Harriman remarked that Mr. Gromyko had not done himself justice with his argument. He professed that

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there were Chiang Kai-shek officers in the Plaine des Jarres. If the Soviets believed that, then the ICC should be permitted to operate effectively, since it was the ICC's responsibility, and not that of the U.S., to bring about the withdrawal of Chiang Kai-shek forces, if they exist. He noted that the Chiang Kai-shek problem was over ten years old. The U.S. had no armed forces in Laos to eliminate them if they were there. Mr. Gromyko replied [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Governor Harriman urged that the ICC find a Chinese and produce him. He noted the "insulting" passage included in the Soviet draft Co-Chairmen message alleging that the Chiang Kai-shek forces were to be found in the Plaine des Jarres. He accused the Soviets of being afraid to let the ICC investigate these charges since it would find North Vietnamese present. Governor Harriman concluded by proposing that the two sides agree at Point I, to let the ICC go everywhere and pick up any Chiang Kai-shek groups which it may find, but also any North Vietnamese. He promised that the U.S. would provide moral and other support for such an effort.

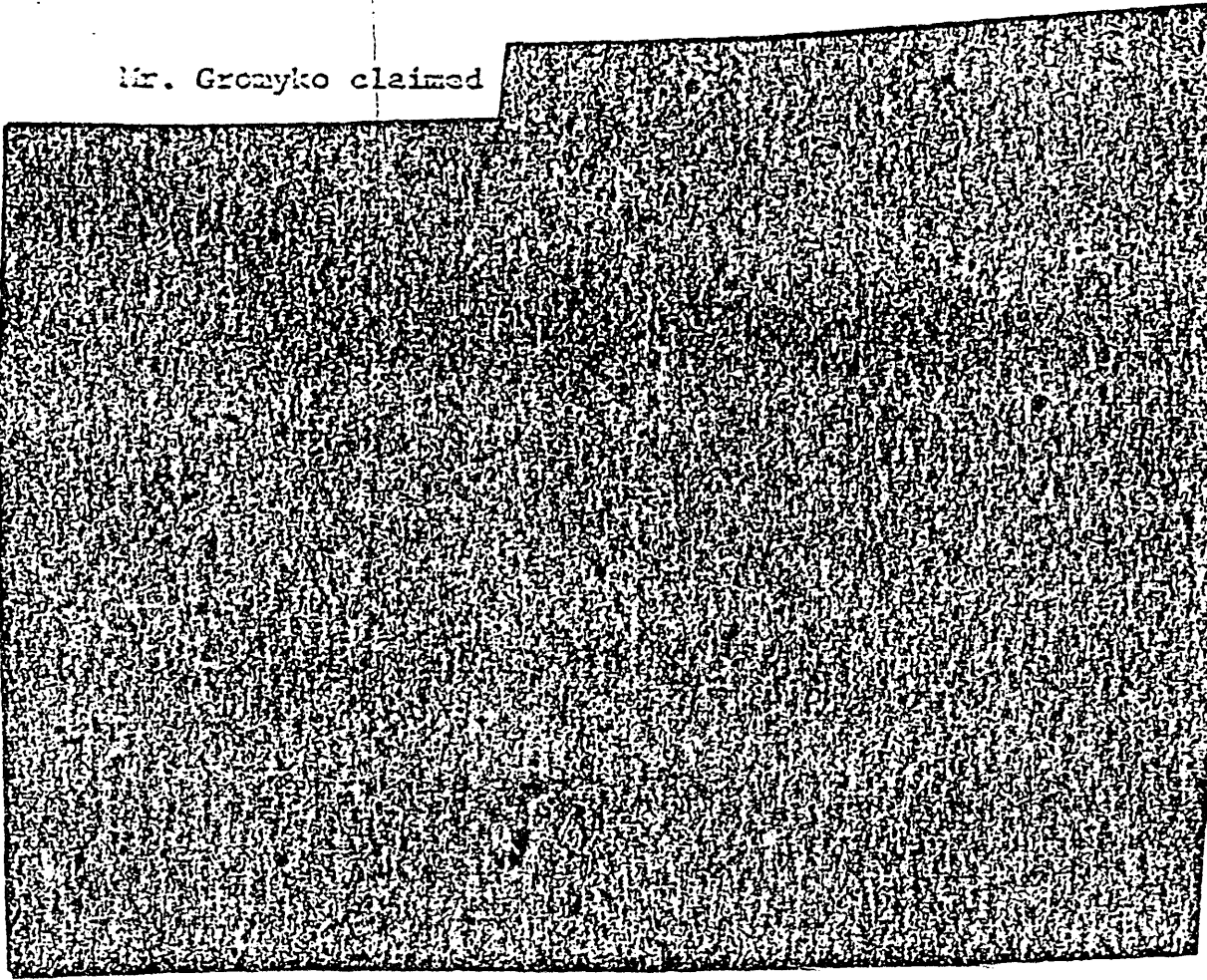
Mr. Gromyko [REDACTED]

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Mr. Gromyko claimed



Governor Harriman proposed that, as a constructive step, each side list what it wished the other side to do in Laos. The U.S., for its part, would investigate complaints regarding the behavior of Phoumi Nosavan, and see what might be done to influence Phoumi, should the complaints prove true. We would, in turn, list our complaints regarding the Pathet Lao. So far as Souvanna Phouma is concerned, it was our impression that the U.S.S.R. had more influence with him than the U.S. Summing up the charges, Governor Harriman said

that it is our impression that Phoumi has been quite cooperative despite his original opposition to the Geneva Accord. We have acknowledged the presence of the Chiang Kai-shek forces in Laos in the past, but have no knowledge of their presence there now. They roam the hills in the Burma-Thai-Lao border area and are opium traders. The U.S. has no military personnel in Laos except for its military attachés.

Governor Harriman said that the Pathet Lao had been responsible for the attack on Kong Le's forces. Colonel DEUANE, who had defected from Kong Le's forces was used to lead the attack, but he was supported by the Pathet Lao. It is also our belief that Viet-Minh cadres participated in the attack. Governor Harriman asked the U.S.S.R. to assist in verifying the truth of these reports, both because of its responsibilities as Co-Chairman and because of the personal interest which Premier Khrushchev must have in seeing his aim fulfilled of achieving a neutral, independent Laos. Governor Harriman noted that there had been no mention made of the assassination of Colonel KETSANA, and urged that both sides use what influence they have to see that such actions are not repeated.

Mr. Gromyko said that he wanted the U.S. to know that the U.S.S.R. continues to support the Government of Souvanna

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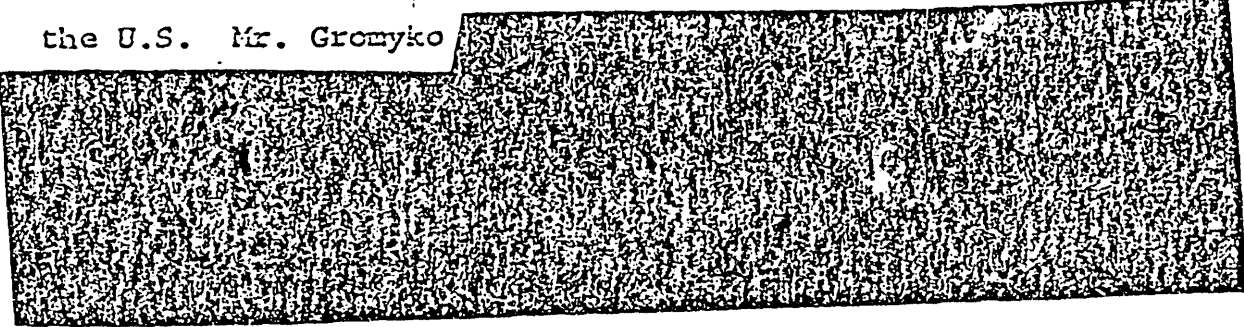
Phouma and the goal of a neutral, independent Laos. He noted [REDACTED]

Governor Harriman recalled the cooperative attitude of the previous Soviet Ambassador, ABRAMOV, and expressed satisfaction over recent reports of cooperation between U.S. Ambassador UNGER and the present Soviet Ambassador, AFANASSIEV. There should be free exchange of information so that each Government would know the other was receiving. He urged again that the ICC be permitted to move around freely to check on things which the U.S.S.R., the U.S., and the Chinese fear. He pointed out that Souvanna Phouma, and he understood Phoumi Nosavan, had supplied the ICC with letters promising freedom of movement in their respective zones. He asked the U.S.S.R. to use its influence with the Pathet Lao to secure a similar letter from them. Mr. Gromyko interjected, at this point, that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Governor Harriman replied that the objective of the ICC must be to see that the Geneva Accords are implemented by (1) controlling and supervising the cease-fire; and (2) assuring the removal and non-introduction of military personnel into Laos. So far

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as the presence of the Chiang Kai-shek forces is concerned, this is complicated by the fact that the Republic of China did not sign the Geneva Agreement. The U.S. is prepared, however, to interpret the Geneva Accord as applying also to the Chiang Kai-shek military. The obligation to remove them, if they are there, falls on the RLG and the ICC, not the U.S. Mr. Gromyko



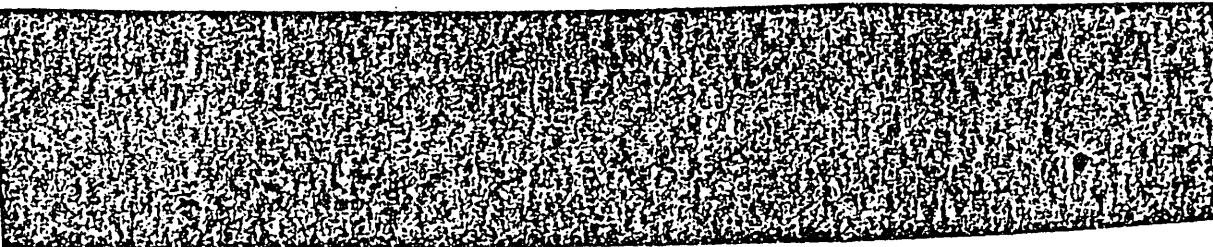
Governor Harriman expressed concern again over the influence exerted by the Viet-Minh on the Pathet Lao, urging that the ICC be permitted to search out the facts. He again proposed that the Pathet Lao issue a statement similar to those made by Souvanna Phouma, and Phoumi, opening their zone to ICC investigation. He handed Mr. Gromyko a copy of Souvanna's note to the ICC requesting such inspections.

Mr. Gromyko

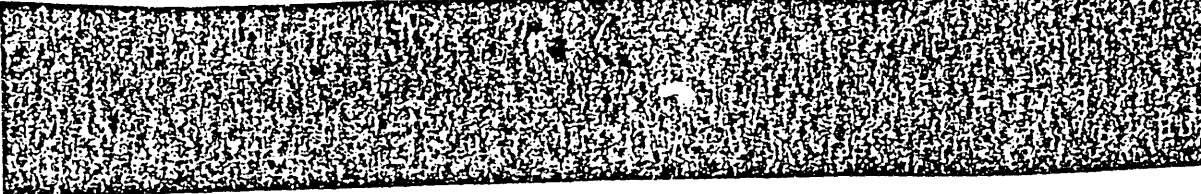


Governor Harriman remarked that the U.S. has provided Souvanna Phouma, who is "your man more than ours", with all

the material and moral support he has requested, consistent with the Geneva Accords. He asked if it would not be a good idea to have the ICC travel around and leave teams behind, as Souvanna Phouma had requested. Mr. Gromyko noted



Governor Harriman expressed the view that the U.S. had used its influence with some success with Phoumi. The U.S.S.R. had an obligation too, to exert influence on the Pathet Lao, specifically to ensure that the ICC is permitted to play its assigned role. Mr. Gromyko replied that



Coming back to the subject of the Chiang Kai-shek military personnel, Governor Harriman urged that the ICC be permitted to verify allegations regarding their presence. Even if there are some, he doubted that they had any influence on events. The U.S. is sincerely convinced, however, that there are a substantial number of Viet-Minh as cadres with the Pathet Lao forces and possibly battalion strength units. It has good reason to think, Governor Harriman said, that they number

several thousand. If the U.S.S.R. does not believe that they are there, why does it not let the ICC look for itself?

After Mr. Gromyko had again said [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Governor Harriman noted that there had been no complaints by Souvanna Phouma against Phoumi, but "very definite complaints" by Souvanna against the Pathet Lao. Mr. Gromyko retorted [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Governor Harriman queried whether Communist China or Souvanna Phouma was Premier in Laos, admonishing the Chinese to send their complaints to the ICC for verification, rather than printing them. Mr. Gromyko replied [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Governor Harriman said that all the signatories of the Geneva Agreement whose views he knows, would welcome an agreement now asking the three groups to facilitate the movement of the ICC. Complaints regarding the presence of Chiang Kai-shek, U.S., and South Vietnamese forces, would be one object of such an investigations.

Mr. Gromyko said [REDACTED]

Governor Harriman concluded by recalling a conversation with STALIN many years ago. Stalin had berated him for always talking about the Poles, who, he said, had caused trouble throughout the centuries. Governor Harriman hoped that the same would not be said of Laos, which is important, because it is a symbol of U.S.-U.S.S.R. cooperation which would have an effect on many other questions of greater importance. Governor Harriman expressed the conviction that the Laotians would be able to solve their own problems, if there were no outside interference.

Mr. Gromyko announced in the course of the discussion that Premier Khrushchev would be pleased to meet with Governor Harriman at 3:00 p.m. that same afternoon (April 26).

The discussion lasted two and one-half hours (10:00 a.m. till 12:30 p.m.).

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Notes of Harriman conversation at Gromyko luncheon,
April 27th, Spiridonovka House.

Jokingly Harriman referred to Gromyko's statement that Chairman Khrushchev would be busy over the weekend and said

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he now understood why. He hoped Gromyko would thoroughly enjoy himself entertaining the "bearded ones". For his part, Harriman liked Marx's beard better than the scraggy one of Castro. Gromyko solemnly came to the defense of Castro's beard saying "It's a good beard - like his policies".

In a more serious vein, Harriman emphasized the common interest we had in the removal of Viet Minh from Laos; also the importance of maintaining the machinery of the Co-Chairmen in good working order. Things in Laos could deteriorate seriously if the neutralists were blotted out. This would mean a direct confrontation of Pathet Lao with conservative forces (F.A.R.). A dangerous situation could result which might spread beyond Laos.

When Harriman objected to the Soviet draft of Co-Chairmen's statement, Gromyko defended it by saying,

